

# Section 1: Cornell Cooperative Extension and You, the Volunteer

## Welcome to Cornell Cooperative Extension

We are pleased that you have accepted a volunteer role in Cornell Cooperative Extension. From the moment of its inception, Cooperative Extension believed in and relied on volunteers - those people who enjoyed sharing their know-how with others. Today, our volunteer force is as strong as ever, helping both adults and youth to improve themselves, their quality of life and their communities through an enthusiastic sharing of information and ideas. You have joined the ranks of nearly 70,000 volunteers who engage in the delivery, support, management and administration of Cooperative Extension programs throughout New York State. Without your time, talents and expertise we could not provide the high quality programs that help 6.3 million New Yorkers “put knowledge to work” each year. We welcome you and thank you.

## What Volunteers Need to Know About CCE

**Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) - New York’s Partner in a Nationwide Educational System**  
Cooperative Extension is a nationwide system of educational programs that are jointly funded by federal, state and county governments. The U. S. Department of Agriculture is the federal partner while land grant universities are state partners. The passage of two laws by the U. S. Congress made this nationwide system possible. The Morrill Act passed in 1862 established the land grant universities and the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 funded the federal portion of Cooperative Extension.

The name **Cornell Cooperative Extension** reflects this history and partnership:

- Cornell** - the land-grant university for New York State
- Cooperative** - cooperation among the land-grant institutions, USDA and New York county governments.
- Extension** - the extending of Land-Grant university resources into communities, enabling all citizens to put research-based knowledge to work in their daily lives.

County governments throughout New York State provide substantial funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension programs conducted within their boundaries. County Cooperative Extension Associations, governed by elected Boards of Directors, provide local input to the program development process and monitor expenditures to ensure that these funds are used to effectively meet the needs of county residents. The county name is added to the Cornell Cooperative Extension title to identify these local Associations.

Empowered by this unique organizational structure, Cornell Cooperative Extension engages citizens and community leaders in processes that identify the educational needs of local people, design programs that support lifelong learning and initiate actions that improve communities. This process of linking research-based knowledge with local citizen participation is summarized in the CCE mission statement.

## Our Mission

*The Cornell Cooperative Extension educational system enables people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work.*

Cornell Cooperative Extension fulfills this mission through a commitment to lifelong education that is learner-centered and results-oriented. CCE's programming is responsive to people's current needs while preparing them for the future. We collaborate with other organizations, agencies and institutions to ensure that practical educational opportunities are accessible in all corners of society. We involve local volunteers in every aspect of program development and delivery, ensuring that they are both beneficiaries and active partners in this process of educational outreach.

## Cornell Cooperative Extension Programs - Based on Research, Focused on Local Needs

The educational programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension vary from County to County. Many factors influence local programs including local needs and interests, local and national issues, and resources available to support local programs. Land-grant university research is a basic component of program support, and information about individual and community needs has a crucial influence on the research agendas of land grant universities.

Statewide program initiatives are established to facilitate programming in the areas of commonality across the state. Initiatives are reviewed and revised on a regular basis and resources are redirected to address new issues as needed.

Cornell Cooperative Extension's current program initiatives are:

- Agriculture & Food Systems
- Children, Youth & Families
- Community & Economic Vitality
- Environment & Natural Resources
- Nutrition, Health & Safety

More information about these initiatives can be found on the Cornell Cooperative Extension website. [www.cce.cornell.edu/about\\_cce.cfm](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/about_cce.cfm)

## Cornell Cooperative Extension Includes All People

Cornell University's statement on diversity and inclusiveness concludes with the assertion that "Cornell is committed to act responsibly and forthrightly to maintain an environment that opens doors, opens hearts and opens minds." This spirit of inclusiveness lies at the core of Cornell Cooperative Extension's plan for ensuring equal program opportunity.

In compliance with federal law "*Cornell Cooperative Extension actively affirms equality of program and employment opportunities regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.*" With respect for the spirit of the law, Cornell Cooperative Extension values, is committed to, and embodies pluralism as a long-term investment in the future. To fulfill this commitment CCE:

- interacts with all people about their interests and needs;
- develops and delivers programs that address these needs;
- trains staff and volunteers to program with and for diverse audiences;
- joins with other groups and organizations in developing, providing, and evaluating programs;
- tolerates no form of discrimination against any group in program participation or involvement in the program development process.

At the county level it is the County Association's Executive Director who is responsible to ensure compliance with equal opportunity laws and Cornell Cooperative Extension's *Affirmative Action Policy*. This policy includes procedures for addressing alleged violations or misapplications of policies related to equal program opportunity. Volunteers may request a copy from their supervisor, the staff member responsible for their assigned program or from the Executive Director.

## What Volunteers Receive from CCE of Erie County

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County is committed to making your volunteer experience as satisfying for you as it is valuable to the accomplishment of our mission. Therefore you can expect:

- orientation, training and supervision that enhance effective use of your interests, skills and time
- pertinent information and communications appropriate to your status
- respect, recognition and trust earned through performance
- a safe environment and protection from liability claims arising from volunteer assignments
- a process for addressing concerns and conflicts

Beyond these basics that prepare you for your volunteer role and support you as you carry it through, you should benefit personally from your relationship with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County. You will have access to educational resources, build friendships with other volunteers, discover new interests, develop new skills and have an impact on your community. We hope you will take full advantage of these opportunities.

## Responsibilities of CCE Volunteers to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

Since CCE volunteers act as representatives of Cornell Cooperative Extension when performing assigned duties you have the responsibility to:

- abide by CCE policies and external regulations that govern your actions
- execute CCE business in an ethical manner and uphold the established code of conduct
- preserve the confidentiality of information about clients and CCE internal affairs that may be entrusted to you
- accept only those assignments that are suitable to your capabilities and time availability and then fulfill those commitments
- use time wisely and work as a team member with CCE staff and other volunteers

## Volunteer Insurance Coverage

### General Liability - County Association Volunteers

Cornell Cooperative Extension's **County Association's Liability** insurance protects you from bodily injury and/or property damage claims **only when** you are acting within the scope of your assigned volunteer responsibilities. If you have personal insurance (e.g., Homeowners, Renters, or Personal Umbrella) that includes liability for volunteer activities, the association's general liability program will act as excess coverage for you. If you do not have such personal insurance, the Cooperative Extension Association's General Liability Program will apply, provided the incident is within the scope of the insurance coverage.

Erie County 4-H Club Leader Handbook, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 6/2004

## **Board Members**

New York State law protects **Directors** and **Officers** of charitable not-for-profit organizations from lawsuits for activities directly related to those official positions, provided your actions do not constitute gross negligence. Claims involving discrimination, workplace harassment, wrongful termination, or other policy or management errors are not covered by general liability insurance but they are covered by Employment Practices Liability insurance if the County Association elects to purchase this insurance coverage. The Executive Director of your county Cornell Cooperative Extension Association will inform Board Members about current local coverage.

## **Automobile Coverage**

If you use your personal vehicle for CCE business your vehicle must be insured in accordance with the New York State Motor Vehicle Law. No liability, collision, comprehensive or no-fault insurance coverage is provided by CCE and you are not covered for side trips. By law, you are financially responsible for any auto accidents when you are at fault. If the County Association has appropriate primary coverage the CCE insurance provides excess liability coverage in the form of “non-owned auto coverage” when volunteers drive their own vehicles for CCE business. If a volunteer is driving an Association vehicle they are covered by the Association vehicle insurance.

## **Using Official Names and Artwork**

The names and artwork (trademarks, insignia, logos, emblems, images, and the like) associated with Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the 4-H Youth Development Program (including, the 4-H Club program and all other CCE 4-H youth programs), the Master Gardener Program, the Sea Grant Program and other Extension programs are regulated either by license, law or program guidelines. The situations in which the names and artwork may be used, the manner in which they may be displayed, the text style and colors required for their reproduction and the size and placement of any official artwork in relation to any other artwork are all specified.

The use of official names and artwork is an important way of identifying Cornell Cooperative Extension programs and building a positive image in the community. However, given the complexity of the regulations, you should check with the staff member in charge of your program whenever you want to use an official name or artwork in exhibits, promotional materials, etc. In all cases use of an official name and/or artwork on items such as T-shirts, caps, key chains, mugs, pens, etc. must be approved by the appropriate authority.

It is also important to distinguish between Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension. While Cornell University is the New York State Land Grant University that administers Cornell Cooperative Extension, these are two separate entities. Therefore, when referring to Cornell Cooperative Extension, always use the full title rather than simply “Cornell” which is understood to mean Cornell University.

## **Fundraising Policies**

Volunteers periodically engage in activities that raise funds to expand resources for Cornell Cooperative Extension programs, to reduce expenses for program participants or to provide special training opportunities for volunteers. To ensure that fund raising activities are consistent with

Cornell Cooperative Extension policies and operating procedures **staff must be consulted during the planning stages and must approve:**

- the purpose of the fund raiser
- the type of fundraiser (This includes checking with P.W. Wood & Son, Inc. to ensure that the activity is covered for liability insurance.)
- the plan for the disbursement of the funds raised
- any expenses to be reimbursed from the proceeds

Additional guidelines that pertain to fundraising within specific programs are included in Section 5: Money Matters.

## **Preventing Accidents and Preparing for Emergencies**

As a CCE volunteer you share with Cornell Cooperative Extension responsibility for the health and safety of those who participate in the activities you lead. Basic guidelines for protecting yourself and program participants are listed below. **More specific safety instructions and emergency procedures can be found in the county section of this handbook and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Youth Protection Policy**, or from your local 4-H Youth Development Program Leader. Review these instructions and procedures periodically to keep them fresh in your mind.

### **Basic Guidelines:**

- Do not deviate from the instructions given during training classes or from the procedures detailed in printed program materials.
- Before using any tool, piece of equipment or hazardous material for the first time request safety instructions and follow them.
- Explain and demonstrate safety procedures and the proper use of tools and equipment to those you teach or lead.
- Before beginning an assignment or starting a program find out where the first aid kit, list of emergency procedures and emergency phone numbers are located. If you will be at a facility that is not owned or managed by Cornell Cooperative Extension take these items with you.
- In case of an accident, medical emergency, natural disaster or other major incident put a responsible individual in charge of your group before starting to follow the emergency procedures. Contact the CCE Executive Director or other designated emergency contact as soon as possible and refer all inquires to that person. **Do not make any statement or give any information to media people or anyone other than Cooperative Extension staff and emergency personnel.**
- If an incident of any kind results in personal injury or property damage the following information should be gathered while it is fresh in everyone's minds -
  - Name, address, phone number of injured person(s)
  - Complete description of events causing injury or property damage
  - Name, address, phone number of witness(es) (VERY IMPORTANT)